

In Whose House Did the Prophet Drink the Honey?

by

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Argument

According to Saheeh Bukhari, Volume 6, Book 60, Number 434 & Volume 8, Book 78, Number 682 it was Zainab's house, while according to Saheeh Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 63, Number 193 & Volume 9, Book 86, Number 102 it was Hafsa's house.

Is this not a contradiction?

Response

This is not necessarily a contradiction.

Let us look at the first set of ahaadith mentioning that it was in Zainab's house:

Saheeh Bukhari: Volume 7, Book 63, Number 192:

Narrated 'Ubaid bin 'Umar:

I heard 'Aisha saying, "The Prophet used to stay for a long **while with Zainab bint Jahsh and drink honey at her house**. So Hafsa and I decided that if the Prophet came to anyone of us, she should say him, "I detect the smell of Maghafir (a nasty smelling gum) in you. Have you eaten Maghafir?" " So the Prophet visited one of them and she said to him similarly. The Prophet said, "Never mind, I have taken some honey at the house of Zainab bint Jahsh, but I shall never drink of it anymore." **So there was revealed: 'O Prophet ! Why do you ban (for you) that which Allah has made lawful for you . . . If you two (wives of Prophet) turn in repentance to Allah,' (66.1-4)** addressing Aisha and Hafsa. 'When the Prophet disclosed a matter in confidence to some of his wives.' (66.3) namely his saying: But I have taken some honey."

and:

Saheeh Bukhari: Volume 8, Book 78, Number 682:

Narrated 'Aisha:

The Prophet used to stay (for a period) **in the house of Zainab bint Jahsh (one of the wives of the Prophet) and he used to drink honey in her house.** Hafsa and I decided that when the Prophet entered upon either of us, she would say, "I smell in you the bad smell of Maghafir (a bad smelling raisin). Have you eaten Maghafir?" When he entered upon one of us, she said that to him. He replied (to her), "No, but I have drunk honey in the house of Zainab bint Jahsh, and I will never drink it again." **Then the following verse was revealed: 'O Prophet ! Why do you ban (for you) that which Allah has made lawful for you?. ..(up to) If you two (wives of the Prophet turn in repentance to Allah.'** (66.1-4) The two were 'Aisha and Hafsa And also the Statement of Allah: 'And (Remember) when the Prophet disclosed a matter in confidence to one of his wives!' (66.3) i.e., his saying, "But I have drunk honey." Hisham said: It also meant his saying, "I will not drink anymore, and I have taken an oath, so do not inform anybody of that '

Let us now look at the second set of ahaadith, which mention that it was in Hafsa's house:

Saheeh Bukhari: Volume 7, Book 63, Number 193:

Narrated 'Aisha:

Allah's Messenger was fond of honey and sweet edible things and (it was his habit) that after finishing the 'Asr prayer he would visit his wives and stay with one of them at that time. **Once he went to Hafsa,** the daughter of 'Umar and stayed with her more than usual. I got jealous and asked the reason for that. I was told that a lady of her folk had given her a skin **filled with honey as a present, and that she made a syrup from it and gave it to the Prophet to drink** (and that was the reason for the delay). I said, "By Allah we will play a trick on him (to prevent him from doing so)." So I said to Sada bint Zam'a "The Prophet will approach you, and when he comes near you, say: 'Have you taken Maghafir (a bad-smelling gum)?' He will say, 'No.' Then say to him: 'Then what is this bad smell which i smell from you?' He will say to you, '**Hafsa made me drink honey syrup.**' Then say: Perhaps the bees of that honey had sucked the juice of the tree of Al-'Urfut.' I shall also say the same. O you, Safiyya, say the same." Later Sada said, "By Allah, as soon as he (the Prophet) stood at the door, I was about to say to him what you had ordered me to say because I was afraid of you." So when the Prophet came near Sada, she said to him, "O Allah's Messenger! Have you taken Maghafir?" He said, "No." She said. "Then what is this bad smell which I detect on you?" He said, "Hafsa made me drink honey syrup." She said, "Perhaps its bees had sucked the juice of Al-'Urfut tree." When he came to me, I also said the same, and when he went to Safiyya, she also said the same. And when the Prophet again went to Hafsa, she said, 'O Allah's Messenger! Shall I give you more of that drink?' He said, "I am not in need of it." Sada said, "By Allah, we deprived him (of it)." I said to her, "Keep quiet." '

and:

Sahih Bukhari: Volume 9, Book 86, Number 102:

Narrated 'Aisha:

Allah's Messenger used to like sweets and also used to like honey, and whenever he finished the 'Asr prayer, he used to visit his wives and stay with them. Once **he visited Hafsa** and remained with her longer than the period he used to stay, so I enquired about it. It was said to me, "A woman from her tribe gave her a leather skin containing **honey as a present, and she gave some of it to Allah's Messenger** to drink." I said, "By Allah, we will play a trick on him." So I mentioned the story to Sauda (the wife of the Prophet) and said to her, "When he enters upon you, he will come near to you whereupon you should say to him, 'O Allah's Messenger! Have you eaten Maghafir?' He will say, 'No.' Then you say to him, 'What is this bad smell?' And it would be very hard on Allah's Messenger that a bad smell should be found on his body. He will say, '**Hafsa has given me a drink of honey.**' Then you should say to him, 'Its bees must have sucked from the Al-'Urfut (a foul smelling flower).' I too, will tell him the same. And you, O Saifya, say the same." So when the Prophet entered upon Sauda (the following happened). Sauda said, "By Him except Whom none has the right to be worshipped, I was about to say to him what you had told me to say while he was still at the gate because of fear from you. But when Allah 's Messenger came near to me, I said to him, 'O Allah's Messenger! Have you eaten Maghafir?' He replied, 'No.' I said, 'What about this smell?' He said, 'Hafsa has given me a drink of honey.' I said, 'Its bees must have sucked Al-'Urfut.' " When he entered upon me, I told him the same as that, and when he entered upon Safiyya, she too told him the same. So when he visited Hafsa again, she said to him, "O Allah's Messenger! Shall I give you a drink of it (honey)?" He said, "I have no desire for it." Sauda said, Subhan Allah! We have deprived him of it (honey)." I said to her, "Be quiet!"

Looking at these two sets of ahaadith, we notice two key differences between them:

- 1) The set in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) drank the honey at Zainab's house affirms that it was the incident at Zainab's house which caused the revelation of Surah 66, Ayah 1-4. No such thing was mentioned in the other set.
- 2) The other set in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) drank the honey at Zainab's house shows that the Prophet (peace be upon him) later on declared honey forbidden for himself (for he said, "I will never drink it again"), while the other set of ahaadith wherein the Prophet (peace be upon him) drank the honey in Hafsa's house does not (for he **only** said "I have no desire for it").

What does this show? This shows that both of these sets of ahaadith are speaking about **different incidents; hence, there is no contradiction.** The incident at Hafsa's house likely occurred before the one at Zainab's.¹ There is absolutely nothing far-fetched and unreasonable regarding

¹ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani in his *Fathul Baari* says:

such a reconciliation.

In conclusion, there is no convincing reason for us to believe that these stories stand in contradiction with each other, as they are not even speaking about the same incident to begin with.

، وَيُمْكِنُ أَنْ تُكُونَ الْقِصَّةُ الَّتِي وَقَعَ فِيهَا شُرْبُ الْعَسَلِ عِنْدَ حَفْصَةَ كَانَتْ سَابِقَةً. وَيُؤَيِّدُ هَذَا الْحَمْلُ أَنَّهُ لَمْ يَقَعْ فِي طَرِيقِ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ الَّتِي فِيهَا أَنَّ شُرْبَ الْعَسَلِ كَانَ عِنْدَ حَفْصَةَ تَعَرُّضَ لِلْأَيَّةِ وَلَا لِذِكْرِ سَبَبِ النَّزُولِ